



The President's Daily Brief

May 9, 1975

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THAILAND

Bangkok is moving rapidly to put its relations with Asian communist regimes on new footings.

Yesterday, the day after the arrival in Bangkok of a North Korean diplomatic mission, the Thai government announced its recognition of the Pyongyang regime. Bangkok's ties with Seoul will not be broken, but Pyongyang will probably press Bangkok to remove its last token representation from the UN Command in Korea. In the past two years, Pyongyang has made steady diplomatic gains in Southeast Asia by establishing relations with Malaysia, Australia, and Laos, and it is now courting the Philippines.

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There is evidence that recognition of China is in the offing. [REDACTED]

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The Thai are also prepared to extend recognition to Hanoi if the North Vietnamese are willing. Negotiations aimed at formalizing relations, however, may take some time. The Thai cabinet [REDACTED] directed the foreign minister to establish relations with Hanoi "at such time as he deems appropriate." In the past Hanoi has insisted that all US forces in Thailand be withdrawn before formal ties could be established. Hanoi has hinted, however, that assurances from the Thai that US forces will not be used against Indochina will meet this condition.

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LAOS

Judging from a conversation yesterday with Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma and against the background of the nearly total collapse of non-communist will and morale, the US chargé in Vientiane has concluded that Souvanna no longer considers the non-communist side to be a factor in the present coalition. In the chargé's view, a communist takeover of the government could occur in a matter of days and without the use of more than token force.

In talking with the chargé, Souvanna expressed concern only over the country's economic and financial difficulties and made a pitch for increased US economic assistance. He displayed optimism over the political and military situations--espousing Lao communist views completely--and placing particular blame for current "problems" on rightist Defense Minister Sisouk na Champassak and General Vang Pao. Souvanna appeared ready to dismiss Sisouk from the cabinet. He has already ordered the firing of Vang Pao and a number of other general officers.

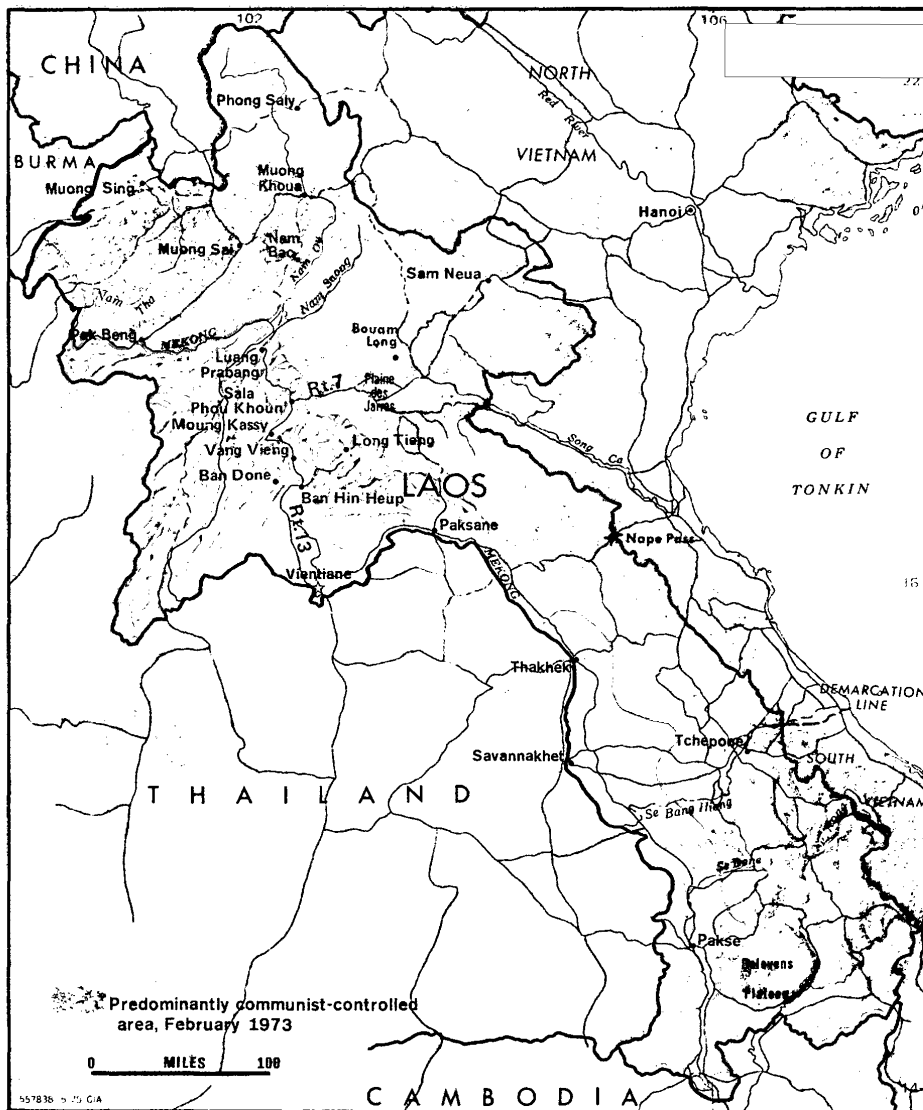
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In the event of a communist takeover, Souvanna could well remain in office and the facade of a coalition government could continue. Any replacements among cabinet officers and military region commanders, however, would almost certainly be subservient to the Lao communists.

Despite an agreement by the communists on Wednesday to call for an end to political demonstrations, they ordered one to be staged against the US embassy last night. A hostile crowd of approximately 1,500 hurled rocks at the embassy in Vientiane. Speakers sounded anti-US themes, denouncing CIA and AID. Placards called for the removal of a number of rightist cabinet ministers. Some demonstrators attempted to force the gate to the embassy

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but were repelled by police. No US mission personnel were injured. After a short time the crowd moved on to the national stadium for a rally.

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Although the Lao communist leadership in Vientiane has signed a joint communiqué with Souvanna, calling for an end to the recent fighting in northern Laos, communist headquarters at Sam Neua appears in no hurry to issue cease-fire orders to its troops.

Lao communist forces are continuing to push south from the Sala Phou Khoun - Muong Kassy area along Route 13. Contrary to earlier reports, they apparently elected to bypass rather than attack the town of Vang Vieng which remains in non-communist hands. Vang Vieng has been effectively isolated, however, by communist attacks farther south against the towns of Ban Done and Ban Hin Heup.

By consolidating their control over the 75-mile stretch of Route 13 between Sala Phou Khoun and Ban Hin Heup, the communist are now in a good position to interdict the only overland resupply route to General Vang Pao's headquarters at Long Tieng. Indeed, there is mounting evidence that the removal of Vang Pao, the demobilization of his Meo tribal forces, and the complete neutralization of both military regions in northern Laos may be the Lao communists' primary objectives in the current round of fighting.

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GREECE-TURKEY

The Turkish general staff blames the US aid cutoff for the lack of progress toward a Cyprus settlement and an agreement with Greece on the Aegean.

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officials have decided that no significant concessions will be made on Cyprus until the Aegean problem is resolved.

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The Turkish general staff apparently assumes that the Greeks are waiting for the cutoff in US aid to force Ankara to adopt a softer line. The general staff had earlier taken a "wait and see" approach to the US aid cutoff, but now that Turkey has a legitimate government, military leaders are recommending retaliatory moves against US military facilities if aid is not resumed.

Earlier Turkish threats to retaliate against US facilities have been postponed as the Turks clung to the belief that the arms embargo would be lifted. Ankara may continue to follow this line officially, but there is skepticism among top officials that arms deliveries will be resumed at any early date.

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The Turkish approach toward Greece will be tested on May 18 when foreign ministers of the two countries are scheduled to meet in Geneva to discuss their claims in the Aegean and other points of friction. They are to talk over the texts that will be submitted to the International Court of Justice on their conflicting claims to mineral rights on the Aegean continental shelf.

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Greek Foreign Minister Bitsios is prepared to discuss but is not empowered to negotiate the Cyprus issue. He told the US embassy that he had no intention of substituting himself for Greek Cypriot negotiator Clerides. Bitsios expressed concern that the Turkish Cypriot referendum on the new Turkish Cypriot constitution will be held the same day he is due to meet the Turkish foreign minister, a fact which could adversely affect the atmosphere for the talks.

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USSR

Soviet leader Brezhnev's speech yesterday at the VE-Day celebrations was, as appropriate to the occasion, heavy on oratory and light on substance.

One notable thought to emerge in Brezhnev's speech is his suggestion that the European security conference could serve as an example for other parts of the world. This, however, may only be Moscow's way of kicking off another effort to stimulate interest in an Asian collective security scheme--a concept the Soviets have been pushing for some time.

Brezhnev expressed the Soviet Union's hope for better relations with the US, but avoided subjects such as the coming summit meeting in Washington. He called for "concrete agreements" to reduce arms, but did not mention the recently adjourned SALT talks.

Picking up on a theme recently enunciated by Defense Minister Grechko, Brezhnev cited the allied cooperation during World War II as relevant to the more complicated task of preventing another "world-wide disaster." Brezhnev did not, however, repeat Grechko's explicit reference to "political and military cooperation." [redacted]

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[redacted] the speech did not include the assertion that detente is "gaining strength," [redacted].

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The speech's rhetoric was colored by the communist victory in Vietnam. Brezhnev said, for example, that it was "high time that those whom this concerns" recognize that the suppression of liberation movements is doomed to fail. He said also, however, that elimination of the Vietnam "hotbed" creates conditions for a better international atmosphere and better relations between the Soviet Union and the US.

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PORTUGAL

The cooperation agreement between Portuguese Communists and Socialists announced on Tuesday is already coming apart.

The Communists have now charged the Socialists with trying to use the election results to create divisions among military leaders and within the labor movement. The Communist charge is in response to Socialist Party leader Soares' warning on Wednesday that if the two parties are to work together, the Communists must loosen their control of organized labor, the press, and local governments.

Soares specifically called for union and municipal elections and urged the government to investigate bias in the media. The Socialists fear the Communists will try to use their influence with radical military officers to change the provisions in a draft labor law that call for union elections. The text of the law has not yet been released, which could indicate that the issue has not been finally resolved.

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CUBA

Cuba still insists on the termination of the US economic denial program as a prerequisite to any negotiations with Washington. An official press release published in Havana yesterday emphasized this point, probably to offset foreign journalists' misleading accounts of Fidel Castro's press conference Wednesday night. Other portions of the release, however, underscored Cuba's interest in improving Cuban-US relations.

One quote attributed to Castro, for example, appears to be a direct affirmative response indicating a willingness to recognize and accept "a mutuality of obligation."

Castro's implication that the negotiation of an agreement against hijacking in early 1973 was a valuable "gesture" toward rapprochement is not borne out by the facts. At that time he warned against just such a misinterpretation of the agreement. Castro's suggestion that his gesture on hijacking might be repaid now by a lifting of the prohibition on the export of foods and medicines to Cuba was probably made with the current OAS meeting in mind. He may expect the US either to press for a lifting of the OAS sanctions or to act unilaterally to permit limited exports, thereby undercutting an OAS policy the US had been instrumental in formulating.

Castro will not be rushed into negotiations. Although he regards a reconciliation with the US as inevitable, his statements at the press conference indicate that he sees the process as a drawn-out affair, involving careful and complex maneuvering for positions advantage. He is under no pressure for a quick solution and instead appears to be trying to generate pressure on the US through the press and public opinion.

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NOTES

Syria has moved surface-to-air missiles to the vicinity of the Euphrates Dam, presumably in case Iraq attempts to attack the dam because of the dispute between the two countries over the downstream distribution of the river water.

Damascus has been building up its forces near the dam for several weeks. The missile equipment at the dam may formerly have been positioned near Damascus; if so, the Syrians have reduced their missile defenses along the front with Israel by over 10 percent.

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Lebanese Prime Minister Rashid Sulh is likely to resign today.

Half of his 18-man cabinet has either resigned or threatened to resign in criticism of the way he handled disturbances in Beirut and Sidon over the past few months. President Franjiah apparently has been willing to see Sulh replaced for some time; Franjiah has probably been looking for a more assertive prime minister who could better control the fedayeen and would be less hesitant in dealing with the country's continuing security problems.

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Philippine President Marcos hopes to make an official visit to Peking this summer, perhaps as early as next month, to participate personally in establishing diplomatic relations.

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